Sri Janardhana Swamy Temple, Varkala, Kerala

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AI Overview

The Sri Janardhana Swamy Temple in Varkala, Kerala, is an ancient, 2,000-year-old Hindu pilgrimage site dedicated to Lord Vishnu (Janardanaswamy), known for its Kerala-Dravidian architecture, hilltop location overlooking the Arabian Sea, and spiritual significance as a Vaishnavite shrine sometimes called "Dakshin Kashi". It features multiple shrines within its complex, attracts many pilgrims, and is a key cultural landmark near Papanasam Beach.

Key Highlights:

- **Deity:** Lord Vishnu (Janardanaswamy).
- **Age:** Believed to be 2,000 years old, originally established by Lord Brahma and later restored.
- **Location:** On a hill in Varkala, offering sea views.
- **Architecture:** Unique blend of Kerala and Dravidian styles, with intricate paintings, say Tripadvisor and Indian Panorama.
- **Significance:** A major Vaishnavite shrine, part of the 108 Divya Desams, and a place for rituals for departed souls.

What to Expect:

- **Complex:** Houses shrines for Vishnu, Shiva, Hanuman, Ganga, and Shastha.
- **Atmosphere:** A spiritual hub with healing energies, attracting global pilgrims, say Kerala Tourism.
- **Festivals:** Celebrates Arattu (March-April), Ram Navami, Krishna Janmashtami, and Karkadaka Vavu, says Wikipedia and Kerala Tourism.

Visiting Information:

- **Opening Hours:** Generally 4 AM–12 PM & 5 PM–8 PM, but check locally.
- **Tickets:** No advance tickets needed.

- **Amenities:** Restrooms and onsite services available, say Google Search results and Google Search results.

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Info is given under following headings:

Location, address, phone number...etc., how to get there, greatness of this temple, history and legends connected to Pandavas staying here in exile and Bhima killing Bakasura, architecture, Main deity here and subdeities, daily poojas and rituals and their charges, special poojas, sevas and their charges, festivals, facilities for devotees such as accommodation etc,, donation info, bank acct numbers etc.., nearby Temples, nearby places of tourist interest, nearby budget hotels, .any other info...etc

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Location, Address, Phone Number, etc.

The Sri Janardhana Swamy Temple (also known as Janardanaswamy Temple or Varkala Temple) is an ancient Vishnu shrine perched on a hilltop overlooking the Arabian Sea in Varkala town, Thiruvananthapuram District, Kerala.
It is often called "Dakshin Kashi" (Southern Kashi) due to its significance for ancestral rites.

Address: Sri Janardhana Swamy Temple, Temple Road, Janardhanapuram, Varkala, Thiruvananthapuram District, Kerala - 695141.

Phone Number: No dedicated official phone widely available; inquiries can be made through local tourism office or nearby accommodations (e.g., via Kerala Tourism helpline: +91 471 2321132).

Website: No official temple website; information via Kerala Tourism portals.

How to Get There

By Road: Varkala is on NH-66. From Thiruvananthapuram (40 km, 1 hour), Kollam (30 km), or Kochi (180 km). Frequent KSRTC buses and taxis available.

By Train: Varkala Sivagiri Railway Station (3 km from temple); well-connected to major cities like Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi, and beyond. Autos/taxis from station (10-15 min).

By Air: Trivandrum International Airport (TRV) – 40 km (1 hour by cab).

Best Time: October-March (cool weather); avoid heavy monsoons.

Greatness of This Temple, History and Legends

The Janardhana Swamy Temple is one of Kerala's oldest shrines, believed to be over 2000 years old, with the current structure renovated in the 12th-13th century.
It is revered for papanasham (sin-washing) – bathing in nearby Papanasam Beach is said to cleanse sins, and the temple is a major site for Vavu Bali (ancestral offerings), especially on Karkidaka Vavu day.

Key Legends:

Sage Narada, followed by Lord Vishnu, passed over the site. Lord Brahma saluted Vishnu, but the nine Prajapatis (progenitors) mistook it for saluting Narada and laughed. Brahma cursed them to mortal life; Narada advised penance where his valkala (bark garment) fell – this spot became Varkala ("Val-kala"), and the temple manifested.

Another: Lord Brahma performed yajna here but neglected creation; Vishnu appeared as an old man to remind him.

A Dutch ship captain donated the ancient bell after hearing temple chimes saved his vessel from wreck.

Belief: The idol's right hand (holding offering) slowly rises; Kali Yuga ends when it reaches the mouth.

The temple attracts pilgrims for healing, ancestral rites, and moksha.

Architecture

The temple exemplifies traditional Kerala-Dravidian style with a circular sanctum (sreekovil), conical copper-sheeted dome, intricate wooden carvings (including Navagrahas), gopuram, and mandapam. Reached via long flight of steps, it offers panoramic sea views. Features include painted idols at entrance and an ancient Dutch bell.

Main Deity Here and Subdeities

Main Deity: Lord Janardhana Swamy (form of Vishnu) – standing posture, facing east, four arms holding shankha (conch), chakra (disc), gada (mace), and lotus/kumbham.
Right hand in aabhojana (offering) pose.

Subdeities: Shrines for Lord Shiva, Lord Ganesh, Lord Hanuman (painted), Sasta (Ayyappa), Garuda, and others.

Daily Poojas and Rituals and Their Charges

Timings: 4:00 AM–12:00 PM and 5:00 PM–8:00 PM (approximate; four daily poojas).

Rituals: Usha Pooja, Pantheeradi Pooja, Ucha Pooja, Athazha Pooja, Deeparadhana.

Evening aarti is mesmerizing.

Free general darshan; nominal charges for archana/abhisheka (Rs. 20–200; confirm at counter).

Special Poojas, Sevas and Their Charges

Special rituals include Mukha Charthu, Muzhukkappu (sandal paste decoration). Vavu Bali (ancestral offerings) is prominent. Charges nominal/variable (Rs. 100–1,000+ for special poojas; book at temple).

Festivals

Annual Arattu Festival (Meenam month, March–April): 10-day grand event with flag hoisting, elephant processions, cultural performances, and holy bath (Arattu).

Karkidaka Vavu Bali (July–August Amavasya): Thousands perform ancestral rites.

Other: Vishnu-related festivals like Vaikunta Ekadashi.

Facilities for Devotees Such as Accommodation etc.

Basic amenities: Parking, prasadam counters.

No dedicated temple guest house; many private options nearby (e.g., Devaswom campshed, K N Vihar).

Annadana on festival days.

Donation Info, Bank Acct Numbers etc.

Donations via hundi support maintenance and rituals.
Contact temple authorities or Travancore Devaswom Board for bank details.

Nearby Temples

- Sarkara Devi Temple (near Chirayinkeezhu).
- Sivagiri Mutt (Sree Narayana Guru ashram, 3 km).
- Anjengo Fort area temples.

Nearby Places of Tourist Interest

- Papanasam Beach (adjacent – cliff views, holy dip).
- Varkala Cliff & North Cliff (sunsets, cafes).
- Kappil Lake & Beach (5 km – backwaters).
- Sivagiri Mutt (spiritual site).

- St. Mary's Islands (boating from Malpe, but farther).

Nearby Budget Hotels

Varkala offers abundant cliff/beach stays (Rs. 1,000–3,000/night):

Gateway Hotel Janardhana or similar mid-range.

Budget guesthouses/homestays on Helipad Road/North Cliff (Rs. 800–2,000).

Resorts like Coconut Cove (slightly upscale).

Any Other Info

Only Hindus allowed in inner sanctum; non-Hindus can view from outside.

Dress code: Traditional (cover shoulders/legs).

Famous for spiritual healing and serene sea proximity.

As of December 22, 2025, normal operations; check for festival dates.

🙏 Hari Om! May Lord Janardhana Swamy bless you with peace, prosperity, and liberation from sins.

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Photos

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YouTube Videos:

Sri Janardhana Swamy Temple, Varkala (3 min):

https://youtu.be/zNDnP1g9hhE?si=ZCAuVI-7xGfDTDd2

Sivagiri Mutt and Sri Janardhana Swamy Temple, Varkala (9 min):

https://youtu.be/YI9cljdnOUQ?si=xDqDP5peM28Tc8F7

Temple that ends Time - Sri Janardhana Swamy Temple, Varkala - short video:

https://youtube.com/shorts/0amR-h0iNDc?si=a5pLuDZamc9l_Tdu

Trip to Sri Janardhana Swamy Temple, Varkala - short video:

https://youtube.com/shorts/HV3E3XEBpMU?si=dcMkCd6KOCYASaMZ

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Dr. M. Thirumaleshwar
December 23, 2025

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